

[The Congress Thursday sent to President Bush's desk a supplemental appropriations bill that includes the first mandatory timetable for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Vermont's Congressional Delegation - Sen. Patrick Leahy (D), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I), and Rep. Peter Welch (D) - support the Iraq withdrawal timetable provisions and voted for the bill. The House approved the bill on Wednesday. The Delegation members released the following comments after the Senate approved the bill on Thursday:]

SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY: "President Bush's open-ended escalation keeps our troops in the middle of Iraq's bloody civil war. Policing the widening sectarian violence there threatens our troops as well as our security interests. Instead we should begin bringing our troops home, and the President will compound his disastrous handling of this war if he vetoes this bill and its redeployment timetables. I hope he will reconsider, but I do not expect that he will.

"The Administration also continues to neglect the National Guard's needs, and I am gratified that Senator Bond and I were able to help make up the shortfall in this bill. We have included \$1 billion more for the National Guard's equipment backlogs to improve their readiness for domestic emergencies."

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: "The President misled our country into the war and we have paid a terrible price. The American people have made it abundantly clear that they want a change of policy in Iraq, but the President continues to give us more of the same. It is absolutely appropriate that Congress use the budget process to bring our troops home, and to develop a very different approach to combating international terrorism."

REPRESENTATIVE PETER WELCH: "Congress will not stand by while this President continues to stubbornly cling to a failed policy. The American people want this war to end and they want this Administration held accountable. President Bush should listen to the will of the American people, sign this bill as soon as he gets it, and begin the process of ending this unconscionable war."